

## ABSTRACT

An image processing apparatus for automatically improving the contrast of an input image that is obtained from a digital camera or the like, and obtaining a sharper and clearing image. A contrast improvement unit (11) performs a contrast improvement process on the input image by comparing an object pixel in the input image with pixels in the surrounding area. An image combination unit (12) combines the enhanced image obtained by the contrast improvement process with the input image. The combined image is then output to a desired device such as a printer by an image output unit (13).